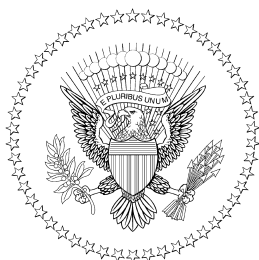


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



Monday, December 10, 2007
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WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, December 7, 2007

The President's Radio Address

December 1, 2007

Good morning. Next week, Congress returns from its Thanksgiving recess. Members are coming back to a lot of unfinished business. And the clock will be ticking because they have only a few weeks to get their work done before leaving again for Christmas.

Congress must address four critical priorities. First, Congress needs to pass a bill to fund our troops in combat. Second, Congress needs to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to monitor terrorist communications so we can prevent attacks against our people. Third, Congress needs to pass a bill to protect middle class families from higher taxes. And fourth, Congress needs to pass all the remaining appropriations bills to keep the Federal Government running.

Congress's first priority should be to provide the funds and flexibility to keep our troops safe and help them protect our Nation. Beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund operations in the war on terror. Our military has waited on these funds for months. The funds include money to carry out combat operations against the enemy in Afghanistan and Iraq. They include money to train the Afghan and Iraqi security forces to take on more responsibility for the defense of their countries. And they include money for intelligence operations to protect our troops on the battlefield.

Pentagon officials recently warned Congress that continued delay in funding our troops will soon begin to have a damaging impact on the operations of our military. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has already notified Congress that he will transfer money from accounts used to fund other activities of the military services to pay for current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan—and no more money can be moved. So he has di-

rected the Army and Marine Corps to develop a plan to lay off civilian employees, terminate contracts, and prepare our military bases across the country for reduced operations. Military leaders have told us what they need to do their job. It is time for the Congress to do its job and give our troops what they need to protect America.

Another priority Congress must address is the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA. FISA provides a critical legal framework that allows our intelligence community to monitor terrorist communications while protecting the freedoms of the American people. Unfortunately, the law is dangerously out of date. In August, Congress passed legislation to help modernize FISA. That bill closed critical intelligence gaps, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence. The problem is, this new law expires on February 1st, while the threat from our terrorist enemies does not.

Congress must take action now to keep the intelligence gaps closed and make certain our national security professionals do not lose a critical tool for keeping America safe. As part of these efforts, Congress also needs to provide meaningful liability protection to those companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in the efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

Congress's third priority should be to fix the Alternative Minimum Tax. The AMT was designed to ensure that the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT decades ago, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is creeping up on more and more middle class families. If Congress fails to pass legislation to fix the AMT, as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to the AMT. On average, these taxpayers would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next year. This is a huge tax increase

that taxpayers do not deserve and Congress must stop.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the budget. One of Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet we are in the final month of the year, and Congress still has work to do on 11 of the 12 annual spending bills. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling all these bills into one monstrous piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and porkbarrel spending.

This is not what Congressional leaders promised when they took control of the Congress at the start of the year. In January, one congressional leader declared, "No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol, while families in America struggle to get ahead." He was right. Congressional leaders need to keep their word and pass the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way.

The end of the year is approaching fast, and Americans are working hard to finish up their business. Yet when it comes to getting its business done, Congress is only getting started. Members of Congress now have only a few weeks left before they head home for the holidays. Before they do so, I urge them to do their job: fund our troops; protect our citizens; provide taxpayers relief; and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on November 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Congressional Action on the Legislative Agenda

December 3, 2007

Good morning. Congress returns from its 2-week Thanksgiving break today. They have just 2 weeks to go before they leave town again. That's not really a lot of time to squeeze in nearly a year's worth of unfinished business.

In fairness, Congress was not entirely out over the past 2 weeks. In a political maneuver designed to block my ability to make recess appointments, congressional leaders arranged for a Senator to come in every 3 days or so, bang a gavel, wait for about 30 seconds, bang a gavel again, and then leave. Now, under the Senate rules, this counts as a full day. If 30 seconds is a full day, no wonder Congress has got a lot of work to do.

Congress needs to start by passing a bill to fund our troops in combat. Beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund these operations in the war on terror. Yet some in Congress are withholding this funding because they want to substitute their judgment for that of our military commanders. Instead of listening to the judgment of General Petraeus, they are threatening to withhold money he needs unless they can mandate an arbitrary date of withdrawal.

This month, more of our troops will return home as a result of the success we're seeing in Iraq. People are coming home. For Congress to insist on setting an arbitrary date for withdrawal would put the gains General Petraeus and our troops have made in danger—and that would threaten the security of our country. It's unconscionable to deny funds to our troops in harm's way because some in Congress want to force a self-defeating policy, especially when we're seeing the benefits of success.

Secretary Gates and other senior Pentagon officials say the delay in our funding will mean this for our military: Unless Congress acts, the Defense Department will soon be required to begin giving layoff notices to about 100,000 civilian employees. Unless Congress acts, the military task force developing ways to better detect and protect our troops from roadside bombs will run out of money by early next year. Unless Congress acts, the Army will run out of operations and maintenance money in February. Unless Congress acts, the Marine Corps will run out of similar funds in March.

Earlier this year, congressional leaders were trying to impose conditions on funds because they said our strategy in Iraq was not working. We changed our strategy, and

now even many of those who initially opposed the surge acknowledge that it is achieving results. It is time for Members of Congress to meet their responsibility to our men and women in uniform, and they should stay in session until they pass these emergency funds for our troops.

Second, Congress needs to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to monitor terrorist communications. In August, Congress passed legislation to help modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. That bill closed critical intelligence gaps, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence information about terrorist plots. The problem is, the new law expires on February 1st, while the threat from the terrorists does not expire.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has warned that unless the FISA reforms in the act are made permanent, our national security professionals will lose critical tools they need to protect our country. Instead of listening to the judgment of Director McConnell, some in Congress now want to restrict the intelligence tools that help keep the American people safe. They are blocking efforts to provide meaningful liability protection to those companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in our efforts to defend our Nation following the September the 11th attacks. Congress must stop this obstruction and make certain our national security professionals do not lose a critical tool for keeping our country safe.

Third, Congress needs to act immediately to prevent the Alternative Minimum Tax from hitting more Americans this year. The AMT was enacted in 1969 to ensure that a few hundred wealthy individuals paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is being imposed on more and more middle class families.

Last month, Treasury Secretary Paulson wrote a letter to Members of Congress warning them about this: that if they put off an AMT fix, it could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Yet instead of listening to Secretary Paulson's warning, Congress continues to delay action.

The longer Congress delays action, the longer Americans will wait—likely wait to get their tax refund checks next year.

If Congress fails to act, as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to AMT. On average, these taxpayers—many of them middle class families—would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next April. At a time when many Americans are struggling with home mortgages and health care costs, the last thing they need is for Congress to stick them with an additional tax increase.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the Federal budget. One of the Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet only 1 of the 12 spending bills has made it into law. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling the remaining bills into one monster piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and wasteful spending. Now is not the time to burden our economy with wasteful Washington spending that will lead to higher taxes. Congressional leaders need to do their job and pass the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way. And if they send me an irresponsible spending bill, I will veto it.

The end of 2007 is approaching fast, and the new Congress has little to show for it. I call on Members to use the time left to support our troops and to protect our citizens, prevent harmful tax increases, and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at the Children's Holiday Reception

December 3, 2007

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. I've got two jobs. One is to introduce you to my wife, Laura, and two is to tell you how much we admire your moms and dads, how much we appreciate their service to our country.

I know it's hard when you have a loved one, somebody you love a lot, not going to be around for the Christmas season. And one way we hope to help you through the moment is to invite you here to the White House for what's going to be a pretty special moment.

So I want to say thank you. When you talk to your mom or dad or e-mail your mom or dad, you make sure you tell them that President and Mrs. Bush are sure proud of their contributions to our country.

And so with that, I'm going to do my second job, which is to bring to the podium here my wife, First Lady Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the U.S.-Palestinian Public-Private Partnership

December 3, 2007

It's been my honor and the honor of key members of my administration to welcome Minister Abu Daqqa here. She's the Minister of Youth for the Palestinians. I also want to welcome friends, business leaders, community activists who are committed to a public-private partnership to help the Palestinian Government provide hope, particularly for the young—she's the Minister of Youth.

And so Walter Isaacson and the other leaders here have outlined a strategy to us as to how we can make sure our USAID money and our OPIC money can be leveraged with private participation to help the Palestinians develop a civil society that is a key part of making sure that the vision of two states living side by side in peace becomes a reality.

And so Madam Minister, you're seeing the best of America. You're seeing private citizens who care deeply about peace come together with a Government that is dedicated to a two-state solution to develop a strategy to help you succeed.

And one of the things that interests me a lot is the fact that we are going to help the Palestinians develop youth centers, places where young Palestinians can come

and learn new technical skills or language skills or have mentoring programs, all aimed at saying, there is a hopeful future; a future where you don't have to adhere to violence; a future where radicalism is not in your sights; a future where peace is possible.

And so we're proud you're here in America. We want to thank you for your commitment to living side by side with Israel in peace. You have a friend here in the United States to help you achieve this objective.

And I want to thank my fellow citizens for being so spirited that you're willing to take time out of your busy lives to help this young democracy get up on its feet and eventually lead the peace that we all are so hopeful for.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Walter Isaacson, president and chief executive officer, Aspen Institute.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2007

December 3, 2007

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

Hanukkah commemorates a victory for freedom and the courage and faith that made it possible. More than 2,000 years ago, the land of ancient Israel was conquered, its sacred Temple was desecrated, and the Jewish people were forbidden to practice their faith. A patriot named Judah Maccabee and his followers rose up against their oppressors to take back Jerusalem. When the Maccabees returned to reclaim and purify their Holy Temple, the oil used for dedication should have lasted only one day but burned for eight. Every year since then, Jews have celebrated this victory of light over darkness and given thanks for the presence of a just and loving God.

As Jewish Americans prepare to light the Hanukkah candles, we are reminded of the many blessings in our lives. The candles' glow has the power to lift our souls, put hope in our hearts, and make our Nation a more compassionate and peaceful place. We pray that those who still live in the darkness of

tyranny will someday see the light of freedom, and we ask for God's continued guidance and boundless love and His protection of all those in need during this holiday season.

Laura and I wish all people of the Jewish faith a Happy Hanukkah.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message to the Senate Transmitting a Treaty Between the United States and Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation

December 3, 2007

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith for Senate advice and consent to ratification the Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Australia Concerning Defense Trade Cooperation, done at Sydney, September 5, 2007. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State that includes an overview of this Treaty.

My Administration is prepared to provide to the Senate for its information other relevant documents, including proposed implementing arrangements to be concluded pursuant to the Treaty, relevant correspondence with the Government of Australia, and proposed amendments to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations.

This Treaty will allow for greater cooperation between the United States and Australia, enhancing the operational capabilities and interoperability of the armed forces of both countries. I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Treaty.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 3, 2007.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4.

The President's News Conference

December 4, 2007

The President. Good morning. I appreciate the fact that the United States Senate is going to take up the free trade agreement with Peru today. This agreement will level the playing field for American goods and services. It will create new opportunities for investment. It will strengthen our friendship with a fellow democracy. The House of Representatives has passed this bill. I congratulate the House leadership. And I certainly hope the Senate will pass it as well. This will be a very positive step.

But Congress still has a lot to do and doesn't have very much time to do it. Three weeks from today, Americans will celebrate Christmas, and three groups of Americans are waiting on Congress to act. The first group are the troops. Our troops are waiting on Congress to fund them in their operations overseas. Nearly 10 months ago, I submitted a detailed funding request. Congress has not acted. Our men and women shouldn't have to wait any longer.

Second, our intelligence professionals are waiting for Congress to act. The legislation Congress approved early this year to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to effectively monitor terrorist communications is set to expire in February. Allowing this law to lapse would open gaps in our intelligence and increase the danger to our country. Our intelligence professionals need these tools to keep our people safe, and they need Congress to ensure that these tools are not taken away.

Third, American taxpayers are waiting on Congress to act. Congress has failed to pass legislation that will protect middle class families from the burden of the Alternative Minimum Tax. If Congress doesn't act, millions of Americans will be hit with an unexpected tax bill. And even if Congress does act by the end of the year, this action could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Congress expects Americans to pay their taxes on time, and the least the Congress can do is make sure Americans get their refunds on time.

Americans also expect their tax dollars to be spent wisely. Yet today, 11 of the 12 annual spending bills that fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government remain unfinished. And now, congressional leaders are talking about piling these bills into one monstrous piece of legislation which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and wasteful spending. Taxpayers deserve better. And if the Congress passes an irresponsible spending bill, I'm going to veto it.

The holidays are approaching, and the clock is ticking for the United States Congress. Based on the record so far, Americans could be forgiven for thinking that Santa will have slipped down their chimney on Christmas Eve before Congress finishes its work. Let's hope they're wrong.

And now I'll be glad to answer some questions, starting with Terry Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Mr. President, a new intelligence report says that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program 4 years ago and that it remains frozen. Are you still convinced that Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb? And do the new findings take the military option that you've talked about off the table?

The President. Here's what we know. We know that they're still trying to learn how to enrich uranium. We know that enriching uranium is an important step in a country whose desire it was to develop a weapon. We know they had a program. We know the program was halted.

I think it is very important for the international community to recognize the fact that if Iran were to develop the knowledge that they could transfer to a clandestine program it would create a danger for the world. And so I view this report as a warning signal that they had the program; they halted the program. And the reason why it's a warning signal is that they could restart it. And the thing that would make a restarted program effective and dangerous is the ability to enrich uranium, the knowledge of which could be passed on to a hidden program.

And so it's a—to me, the NIE provides an opportunity for us to rally the inter-

national community—continue to rally the community to pressure the Iranian regime to suspend its program.

You know, the NIE also said that such pressure was effective, and that's what our Government has been explaining to our other partners in keeping the international pressure on Iran. The best diplomacy, effective diplomacy, is one in which all options are on the table.

Intelligence Reform/Iran

Q. Mr. President, Iraq's WMD turned out not to be there, and now Iran halted its nuclear program in 2003. Are you concerned that the United States is losing credibility in the world and now may be seen as the boy who cried—who called wolf?

The President. Actually, I am—I want to compliment the intelligence community for their good work. Right after the failure of intelligence in Iraq, we reformed the intel community so that there was a lot of serious considerations of NIEs in a way that would give us confidence. And here's a, I think, a very important product that is a result of the reforms we've put in place. As a matter of fact, the American people should have confidence that the reforms are working and that this work on the intel community is important work.

People said, "Well, why is it that you can't get exact knowledge quicker?" Well, the answer is, is because we're dealing with a regime that is not very transparent, and frankly, we haven't had a very good presence in Iran since 1979. And that's why I instructed the intel community to beef up its intelligence on Iran. So we could have a better sense for what they're thinking and what they're doing. And this product is a result of intelligence reform and, more importantly, the good, hard work of our intelligence community.

One of the reasons why this is out in the public arena is because I wanted—and our administration believed that, one, it was important for people to know the facts as we see them. Secondly, that members of my administration had been very clear about the weapons program earlier this year. And therefore, it's important for the American people to see that there has been a reevaluation of the Iranian issue.

David [David Gregory, NBC News].

Intelligence Analysis/Iran

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I'd like to follow on that. When you talked about Iraq, you and others in the administration talked about a mushroom cloud; then there were no WMD in Iraq. When it came to Iran, you said in October—on October 17th, you warned about the prospect of world war III, when months before you made that statement, this intelligence about them suspending their weapons program back in '03 had already come to light to this administration. So can't you be accused of hyping this threat? And don't you worry that that undermines U.S. credibility?

The President. David, I don't want to contradict an august reporter such as yourself, but I was made aware of the NIE last week. In August, I think it was, John McConnell—Mike McConnell came in and said, "We have some new information." He didn't tell me what the information was; he did tell me it was going to take a while to analyze. Why would you take time to analyze new information? One, you want to make sure it's not disinformation. You want to make sure the piece of intelligence you have is real. And secondly, they want to make sure they understand the intelligence they gathered. If they think it's real, then what does it mean? And it wasn't until last week that I was briefed on the NIE that is now public.

And the second part of your question has to do with this: Look, Iran was dangerous; Iran is dangerous; and Iran will be dangerous if they have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon. The NIE says that Iran had a hidden—a covert nuclear weapons program. That's what it said. What's to say they couldn't start another covert nuclear weapons program? And the best way to ensure that the world is peaceful in the future is for the international community to continue to work together to say to the Iranians, we're going to isolate you. However, there is a better way forward for the Iranians.

Now, in 2003, the Iranian Government began to come to the table in discussions with the EU-3, facilitated by the United States. In other words, we said to the EU-3, we'll support your efforts to say to the Ira-

nians, you have a choice to make: You can continue to do policy that will isolate you, or there's a better way forward. So that was the sticks-and-carrots approach.

You might remember, the United States said at that point in time, we'll put the WTO on the table for consideration, or we'll help you with spare parts for your airplanes. It was all an attempt to take advantage of what we thought was a more openminded Iranian regime at the time—a willingness of this regime to talk about a way forward. And then the Iranians had elections, and Ahmadi-nejad announced that—to the IAEA that he was going to—this is after, by the way, the Iranians had suspended their enrichment program—he said, "We're going to stop the suspension; we'll start up the program again." And that's where we are today.

My point is, is that there is a better way forward for the Iranians. There has been a moment during my Presidency in which diplomacy provided a way forward for the Iranians. And our hope is we can get back on that path again. But what is certain is that if Iran ever had the knowledge to develop a nuclear weapon and they passed that knowledge on to a covert program, which at one time in their history has existed, the world would be more dangerous. And now is the time for the international community to work together.

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Just to follow, I understand what you're saying about when you were informed about the NIE. Are you saying at no point while the rhetoric was escalating, as "world war III" was making it into conversation, at no point nobody from your intelligence team or your administration was saying, maybe you want to back it down a little bit?

The President. No, nobody ever told me that. Having said—having laid that out, I still feel strongly that Iran is a danger. Nothing has changed in this NIE that says, okay, why don't we just stop worrying about it. Quite the contrary. I think the NIE makes it clear that Iran needs to be taken seriously as a threat to peace. My opinion hasn't changed.

And I just explained, Jim [Jim Axelrod, CBS News], that if you want to avoid a really

problematic situation in the Middle East, now is the time to continue to work together. That's our message to our allies, and it's an important message for them to hear. And here's the reason why: In order for a nation to develop a nuclear weapons program, they must have the materials from which to make a bomb, the know-how on how to take that material and make it explode, and a delivery system.

Now, the Iranians—the most difficult aspect of developing a weapons program, or as some would say, the long pole in the tent, is enriching uranium. This is a nation—Iran is a nation that is testing ballistic missiles. And it is a nation that is trying to enrich uranium. The NIE says this is a country that had a covert nuclear weapons program, which, by the way, they have failed to disclose, even today. They have never admitted the program existed in the first place.

The danger is, is that they can enrich, play like they got a civilian program—or have a civilian program, or claim it's a civilian program—and pass the knowledge to a covert military program. And then the danger is, is at some point in the future, they show up with a weapon. And my comments are, now is the time to work together to prevent that scenario from taking place. It's in our interests.

Yes, ma'am.

Iran

Q. Mr. Bush, how can you say nothing has changed? You may see it this way, but the rest of the world is going to see the lead as the fact that the nuclear weapons program was halted in 2003.

The President. Right.

Q. When you first saw this, weren't you angry? You didn't know about Syria. In 2005, you had the same assessment, "with high confidence that Iran currently is determined to develop nuclear weapons." And now, quite the opposite. How can you possibly think the rest of the world is going to continue—to the degree it did—to rally around you and your intelligence?

The President. Because many in the world understand that if Iran developed a nuclear weapon, the world would be a very dangerous place. Secondly, many of the

world are going to take heart in noting that it's diplomatic pressure that caused them to change their mind. And plenty of people understand that if they learn how to enrich, that knowledge can be transferred to a weapons program, if Iran so chooses.

And I think this is a—it's a—to me, it's a way for us to continue to rally our partners. That's why I'm working the phones, and Condi Rice is working the phones. All of us are calling our partners. And I appreciate many of the comments that have come out of the capitals.

One thing is for certain. The NIE talks about how a carrot-and-stick approach can work. And this is heartening news to people who believe that, on the one hand, we should exert pressure, and on the other hand, we should provide the Iranians a way forward. And it was working until Ahmadi-nejad came in. And our hope is that the Iranians will get diplomacy back on track.

Yes, ma'am.

Intelligence Analysis

Q. Why should you trust this intelligence since it's different than 2005? Why should we trust it any more?

The President. Well, you know, I'm—without getting into sources and methods, I believe that the intelligence community has made a great discovery. And they've analyzed the discovery, and it's now part of our Government policy.

Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters], I apologize for getting immediately to the TV people. That's just bad protocol; I should have called on you.

Q. She went already; didn't she?

The President. Oh, she already has—[inaudible].

Q. Yes, you're getting on to TV. [Laughter]

Q. Yes, I've got another question though.

The President. I'm having such a good time, I forgot the past.

Q. I have more questions. You're just afraid I'll ask another followup, which I'd love to.

The President. No, but you're just kind of belting them out. [Laughter] Yes.

Q. Okay, 2005, why—the poll says—

Q. Thank you—

The President. Ed [Ed Henry, Cable News Network].

Q. —Mr. President.

The President. Excuse me, Toby.

Saudi Arabian Sexual Assault Case

Q. Thank you. Another issue—on another issue of credibility in the Mideast, at the Annapolis summit, you used your influence to get Saudi Arabia to the table. But I wonder whether now you will use your influence to do something about the Saudi rape case that's gotten so much international attention. What goes through your mind when you hear about a 19-year-old Saudi woman getting gang-raped by 7 men and basically a Saudi court blames the victim and sentence her to 200 lashes? You spoke to King Abdullah by telephone in the last couple of weeks. Did you press him on this case? If so, what did you say? And if not, are you giving him a pass?

The President. My first thoughts were these: What happens if this happened to my daughter? How would I react? And I would have been—I would have been—I'd have been very emotional, of course. I'd have been angry at those who committed the crime, and I'd be angry at a state that didn't support the victim. And our opinions were expressed by Dana Perino from the podium and—

Q. But did you press King Abdullah about it personally?

The President. I talked to King Abdullah about the Middle Eastern peace. I don't remember if that subject came up.

Q. But if it's that important to you, why wouldn't you bring it—at that level, bring it directly up to King Abdullah?

The President. We'll have plenty of time. He knows our position loud and clear.

McKinnon [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

National Economy

Q. Maybe we could switch to the economy just for one second, Mr. President.

The President. Wait a minute. That's not a dis on the front row, is it?

Q. Not at all, sir.

The President. Okay. Well, they're not taking it that way, it doesn't look like—

Q. You're misreading it. [Laughter]

There's a lot of indications that people are increasingly concerned about the state of the economy and the outlook for the next couple of years. Your administration is considering a plan to help people out with their mortgage payments, but I wonder if there's anything else beyond that that you've got in mind? If you could just give us your thoughts about all this.

The President. First of all, let me talk about the Paulson-Jackson initiative. They're working with lenders, service industry people, and investors to come up with a plan that would make it easier for qualified home buyers to stay in their homes. And I appreciate their efforts. And that's an important part of what I'm about to say, and that is this: First of all, the economy—basics in the economy are good. Inflation is low; job creation is good; interest rates are low; productivity is up; exports are up. In other words, the basic underpinnings of the economy are strong.

Secondly, we are addressing the current issues, and homeownership is a current issue. And no question, it's a headwind; it's a part of why many people are saying that the economy is slowing down.

Thirdly, Secretary Paulson has worked with the private sector on a credit reinsurance fund.

Fourthly, we have called consistently on Congress to pass measures that will help keep the economy strong. And one—such as the free trade agreement, which I heralded today. That's a signal, John, that as you keep opening up markets, it will help the psychology of the country. There's not going to be an immediate impact on Peru; I mean, it's not going to happen next month. But nevertheless, when the country is confident we'll continue to open up markets for goods and services, it should say that this administration is aggressively pursuing progrowth policies.

And the main thing we're going to do is make it clear that Congress is not going to raise taxes during a time when this economy could be slowing down.

So I'm optimistic. I recognize there's some serious issues—the credit crunch, as well as the home building industry. I am concerned about people who may not be able to stay in their homes. That's of concern to me and

our administration. That's why we're taking the action we're taking.

Ed [Ed Chen, Bloomberg News].

Home Mortgage Industry

Q. Mr. President, good morning.

The President. Good morning, Ed. Thank you; appreciate that. A little ray of sunshine here. [Laughter]

Q. We do all we can. [Laughter]

Sir, was the Government too slow in this case to recognize the subprime mortgage problem? And what specific expects—do you expect to see with the economy on the proposals that will be coming later this week?

The President. We've been working on this since August, Ed. And ours is a belief that, one, we shouldn't bail out lenders. And so—in other words, we shouldn't be using taxpayers' money to say, okay, you made a lousy loan; therefore, we're going to subsidize you.

Secondly, that we recognize there's—this is a—the home mortgage industry is a little more complex than in the past. The old days, you'd go to your local savings and loans or your bank, get your home mortgage, and if you had a problem, you go back to the banker that loaned you the money and renegotiate if possible. Now what has happened, as you know, people have taken those mortgages and bundled them up as securities. And somebody else owns the mortgage—it's not the originating bank; it's somebody else owns the mortgage.

And so Secretary Paulson is working with a more complex industry than we've had in the past. And that's why it's taken a while, Ed, because not only do you have the lender, you now have a whole service industry that has arisen that will hopefully help people stay in their homes—that's their job—but you've also got people all around the world who now own U.S. mortgages and assets that are U.S. mortgage—bundles of U.S. mortgages.

And so it's a complex assignment. I'm pleased with the work that the Secretary is doing—both Secretaries are doing. I think they're making pretty good progress.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, to go back to Iran for a minute, the Non-Proliferation Treaty

doesn't prohibit a country like Iran from having the knowledge to enrich uranium. Are you setting a different standard in this case and a different international obligation on Iran? And is that going to complicate the efforts to keep the pressure on when it comes to sanctions at the United Nations?

The President. The problem that most of the world has seen in Iran stems from the fact that they hid their program. That's what the NIE says. The '68 agreement that Iran signed contemplated full transparency and openness. They didn't contemplate a regime that would have a covert nuclear weapons program—all the more reason for the international community to continue to work together. If somebody hid their program once, they could hide it again. If somebody defied the agreement that they signed, the codicils of the agreement they've signed, they could do it again. And most of the world understands that Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a serious danger to peace, and therefore, now is the time to work together to convince them to suspend their program.

People say, "Would you ever talk to Iran?" For you veterans here, for those who have been following this administration for a while, you might remember that I have consistently said that we will be at the table with the EU-3 if Iran would verifiably suspend their program, and the offer still stands.

What changed was the change of leadership in Iran. In other words, we had a diplomatic track going, and Ahmadi-nejad came along and took a different tone. And the Iranian people must understand that the tone and actions of their Government are that which is isolating them. There's a better way forward for Iran. There's a better way forward for the Iranian people than one in which they find themselves isolated in the world. Their economy can be stronger. But their leadership is going to have to understand that defiance and hiding programs and defying IAEA is not the way forward.

And my hope is, is that the Iranian regime takes a look at their policies and changes their policies back to where we were prior to the election of Ahmadi-nejad, which was a hopeful period. They had suspended their program; they were at the table. The United States had made some very positive gestures

to convince them that there was a better way forward. And hopefully we can get back to that day.

Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I'd like to ask for one clarification and one question, if I may.

The President. Sure. Depends on what the clarification is.

Q. The clarification is, are you saying that this NIE will not lead to a change in U.S. policy toward Iran or shift in focus?

The President. I'm saying that I believed before the NIE that Iran was dangerous, and I believe after the NIE that Iran is dangerous. And I believe now is the time for the world to do the hard work necessary to convince the Iranians there is a better way forward. And I say, "hard work"—here's why it's hard. One, many companies are fearful of losing market share in Iran to another company. It's one thing to get governments to speak out; it's another thing to convince private sector concerns that it's in our collective interests to pressure the Iranian regime economically.

So I spend a fair amount of time trying to convince my counterparts that they need to convince the private sector folks that it is in their interests and in the—for the sake of peace that there be a common effort to convince the Iranians to change their ways and that there's a better way forward.

So our policy remains the same. I see a danger. And many in the world see the same danger. This report is not a "okay, everybody needs to relax and quit" report. This is a report that says what has happened in the past could be repeated, and that the policies used to cause the regime to halt are effective policies, and let's keep them up; let's continue to work together.

Question, please.

Venezuelan Referendum/Venezuela-U.S. Relations/Colombia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. What does the vote in Venezuela mean for the U.S.? Obviously this is a major loss for Hugo Chavez, a leader who has repeatedly referred to you as the devil. Before his

effort for this never-ending terms in office, he told a crowd confidently, quote, "Anyone who votes 'no' is voting for George W. Bush. Our true enemy is the U.S. empire, and on Sunday, December 2d, we're going to give another knockout to Bush." What's your reaction to Chavez's opponents winning?

The President. The Venezuelan people rejected one-man rule. They voted for democracy. And the United States can make a difference in South America, in terms of Venezuelan influence. And here's how: The Congress can pass a free trade agreement with Colombia. People say, "Well, how does that affect U.S.-Venezuelan relations or the relations of Venezuela in South America with other countries?" And here's how—and I like to quote Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who said, "The biggest fear in South America is not the leader in Venezuela, but the biggest fear for stability is if the United States Congress rejects the free trade agreement with Colombia."

It would be an insult to a friend. It would send a contradictory message to a country led by a very strong leader who is working hard to deal with some very difficult problems, one of which is armed gangs of people that are ruthless and brutal, people who just kidnap innocent people for the sake of achieving political objectives.

And so a vote for democracy took place, a very strong vote for democracy. And the United States policy can help promote democracies and stability. And again, I'm going to repeat to you: If the Congress does not pass the free trade agreement with Colombia, it will be a destabilizing moment.

Olivier Knox [Agence France Press], yes.

Russia-U.S. Relations/Iran

Q. Yes, sir. Thank you very much. This morning you spoke for, apparently, about 40 minutes with President Putin. I was wondering if you could shed a little light on what you talked about? Specifically, did you ask him to not go ahead with the sale of uranium or the shipment of uranium to—

The President. I'm not going to get into the specifics of conversations I have with any world leader. Otherwise, the next time I have a phone call it might be a short one.

Q. Do you have a message—

The President. But I'd be glad to talk about the themes.

Q. Please do.

The President. I don't particularly like when people read out my phone calls with them. Sometimes the words get mischaracterized. Sometimes what I say might not be exact—what they say I said might not be exactly what I said.

But we did spend a lot of time on the Iranian issue. And one of the interesting tactical decisions that Russia has made that the United States supports is the notion that Iran has a sovereign right to have a civilian nuclear power program. What they don't have is our confidence that they should be able to enrich uranium so that those plants would work. Why? Because they had a covert weapons program that they did not declare and have yet to declare. Secondly, we understand that if they were to develop that weapons program, it would be a real danger.

And so the Russians said, "Well, would you support us on this notion, that because they're untrustworthy when it comes to the fuel cycle, we will provide the fuel, and we will collect the spent fuel?" And I have, publicly. I'll say it again. And we discussed this part of our strategy.

Secondly, I explained to him the content of the NIE and what it meant and how our working together has been effective. And thirdly, we talked about ongoing efforts to come up with another U.N. Security Council resolution if the Iranian regime doesn't suspend.

Russian Elections

Q. Sir, did the elections come up, sir—the Russian elections?

The President. They did. They did. And I said we were sincere in our expressions of concern about the elections.

Wolf [Richard Wolf, USA Today].

2008 Presidential Election

Q. A question on the upcoming elections that doesn't require you to—

The President. Which ones would those be?

Q. The ones that begin in January—

The President. Of course.

Q. —that does not require you to take any—to take sides. What is your feeling right now about the tone of the campaign and, in particular, on the Republican side, some of the talk on immigration?

The President. Wolf, for the next 3 months, you and your august colleagues are trying to get me to be pundit in chief. And I unfortunately practiced some punditry in the past; I'm not going to any further. I know, I know, it's just—

Q. A little analysis, maybe? [Laughter]

The President. You can ask another question. I really am going to—look, we got—it's hard to believe—like, a month away from the Iowa caucuses, and it's going to get intense. And elections are intense. They are intense experiences, and they're intense on both sides. This is the first time in a long time that both parties haven't had, kind of, a clear nominee, and it's going to be interesting to watch.

Q. Do you miss it?

The President. Yes, I'm going to miss the campaigning. I like campaigning. And if somebody ever says they don't like campaigning, they're not telling you—either that, or they're a lousy candidate. I mean, it's fun. [Laughter] I enjoy it. I enjoy the crowds; I enjoy the noise; I enjoy giving that message; I enjoy the competition. And, yes, I'm going to miss it.

On the other hand, what I'm not going to miss is what we all—some of us went through in 2000, which was getting out on an airplane and having my friend Candy Crowley pass a virus around and—[laughter]. I got a respiratory infection; so did half the press corps. They got off the plane; I didn't get to get off the plane. [Laughter] And it was tough; it was a tough experience. And—well, look, I'm not dissing Candy; I said, "my friend." Look, it can happen to the best of them, you know.

Yes, Wolf.

Cooperation With Congress/Legislative Agenda

Q. I get another one. [Laughter] This is a good deal. Can you tell us whether you think your personal relationship with the Democratic leaders in Congress has had a negative impact on your ability to get your

legislation through? And how important is that personal relationship?

The President. I have got cordial relations with the leaders when I talk to them. I saw Speaker Pelosi last night at the Congressional Ball at the White House, and we have very cordial relations. Here's—Congress—the Democrats in Congress, in the House and the Senate, need to work out their differences before they come to the White House. You can imagine what it's like to try to deal on an important piece of legislation, and the Democrats in the House have one opinion, and the Democrats in the Senate have another opinion. FISA is a good example.

And in order for us to be able to reach accord, they've got to come with one voice, one position. Nobody—like, the most disappointing thing about Washington has been the name-calling and this kind of—people go out in front of the mikes, and they just kind of unleash. And I've tried hard not to do that. I've tried to be respectful to all parties. And that's disappointing.

On the other hand, I think we can get some things done. The Peruvian trade vote is one; there's an example. Congress needs to get their differences sorted. One of the worst ways to negotiate is to negotiate with one group. They pocket your negotiations, and then another group shows up and says, "Well, you've said this to them; now give us this."

And hopefully, as we come down the stretch here, that they're capable of coming forward with, "Here's what we believe; here's our plan; here's what we would like you to consider," as opposed to some examples, which is passing legislation for the sake of the headline, as opposed to passing legislation to get it passed. And SCHIP is a classic example. They knew I was going to veto the bill. They knew that was going to happen. They knew the veto would be sustained. But they ate up valuable time and passed the bill anyway.

And so we sit here in the White House trying to figure out why. Why would you waste time? Why wouldn't you sit down and try to seriously negotiate an agreement on a bill that they knew was going to get vetoed and sustained?

Now, hopefully in the next—however long they intend to stay here, that we're capable of working together. But if not, I'm going to stand strong for certain principles, and one of which is to make sure our troops get funded. We've got men and women in combat. We've got people risking their lives for the United States of America. And this Congress has yet to fund them, and it needs to. And it needs to fund them without telling our military how to conduct this war. Arbitrary dates for withdrawal are unacceptable, particularly given the fact that the strategy is working. It's working.

And it seems like to me that this Congress ought to be congratulating our military commanders and our troops. And one way to send a congratulatory message is to give them the funds they need, and now is the time to do it.

Let's see here, Mark Silva [Chicago Tribune].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. That would be you back there.

Iran/National Intelligence Estimate

Q. I may want to apologize in advance because I—

The President. Please do.

Q. —I can't help but read your body language this morning, Mr. President. You seem somehow dispirited—somewhat dispirited.

The President. I think you need to apologize for advance—[laughter]. This is like—all of a sudden, it's like psychology 101, you know? [Laughter]

Q. A question related to that, sir, is, twice now—on Iran and Iraq—the facts have failed you on things that you've been outspoken on telling the American people. Senator Harry Reid is saying on the war spending issue that, quote, "The President is not leveling with the American people."

The President. On the war spending issue?

Q. Yes. Are you, in fact, troubled by—

The President. Why don't you clarify that for me?

Q. Well, are you—

The President. What aspect of it? That I don't think we ought to fund the troops?

Q. No, sir.

The President. I think we need to fund the troops. I submitted a supplemental last February. Anyway——

Q. My question, sir, is, are you feeling troubled about your standing here today, about perhaps facing a credibility gap with the American people?

The President. No, I'm feeling pretty spirited, pretty good about life, and have made the decision to come before you so I can explain the NIE. And I have said Iran is dangerous, and the NIE doesn't do anything to change my opinion about the danger Iran poses to the world. Quite the contrary, I'm using this NIE as an opportunity to continue to rally our colleagues and allies.

Q. Do you think it——

The President. It makes it—the NIE makes it clear that the strategy we have used in the past is effective. And the reason why we need to make sure that strategy goes forward for the future is because if Iran shows up with a nuclear weapon at some point in time, the world is going to say, what happened to them in 2007? How come they couldn't see the impending danger? What caused them not to understand that a country that once had a weapons program could reconstitute the weapons program? How come they couldn't see that the important first step in developing a weapon is the capacity to be able to enrich uranium? How come they didn't know that with that capacity, that knowledge could be passed on to a covert program? What blinded them to the realities of the world? And it's not going to happen on my watch, Mark.

And so, kind of, psychology 101 ain't working. It's just not working. I understand the issues; I clearly see the problems. And I'm going to use the NIE to continue to rally the international community for the sake of peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:01 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; and Cable News Network reporter Candy

Crowley. Reporters referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Statement on Senate Approval of a Free Trade Agreement With Peru *December 4, 2007*

I commend the Senate for approving the free trade agreement with Peru with strong bipartisan support. This agreement will level the playing field for American exporters and investors and will expand an important market in this hemisphere for U.S. goods and services, which will help strengthen economic growth and job creation in the United States. Approval of this agreement also signals our firm support for those who share our values of freedom and democracy and expanding opportunity for all.

Today's action by the Senate also marks the approval of the first free trade agreement that fulfills the May 10 bipartisan trade agreement with Congress by incorporating enforceable labor and environmental standards. I look forward to signing this legislation into law and urge Congress to promptly consider and approve our other pending free trade agreements, starting with Colombia, which would be important to the stability of the region, and including Panama and South Korea.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this statement.

Proclamation 8209—National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2007 *December 4, 2007*

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

On December 7, 1941, our Nation was viciously attacked at Pearl Harbor, America's Pacific Fleet was battered and broken, and more than 2,400 American lives were lost. On National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, America honors those brave individuals

who made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our homeland, and we recognize those veterans who with strength and resolve defended our Nation and advanced the cause of freedom during World War II.

When it mattered most, an entire generation of Americans stepped forward to protect our freedom and to defend liberty. Their devotion to duty and willingness to serve a cause greater than self helped secure our future and our way of life. Liberty prevailed because of the sacrifice of these courageous patriots, and America and her allies preserved a world where democracy could flourish. Our Nation remains forever in the debt of these brave Americans.

From the unprovoked attack at Pearl Harbor grew a steadfast resolve that has made America a defender of freedom around the world, and our mission continues as our men and women in uniform serve at home and in distant lands. Today, as we defend our Nation's founding ideals, we pay special tribute to those who lost their lives at Pearl Harbor, honor our veterans of World War II, and celebrate the liberty that makes America a lasting symbol of hope to the world.

The Congress, by Public Law 103-308, as amended, has designated December 7 of each year as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 2007, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I encourage all Americans to observe this solemn occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I urge all Federal agencies, interested organizations, groups, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff this December 7 in honor of those who died as a result of their service at Pearl Harbor.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:07 a.m., December 5, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 6.

Remarks on Arrival in Omaha, Nebraska

December 5, 2007

Good morning. I'm pleased to be back in Nebraska. I do want to say a couple of words about Iran before I talk about my friend Mike Johanns.

On the way out here, I spoke with my team, who gave me a report on conversations that the Secretary of State and our National Security Adviser have had over the last couple of days with their counterparts in the United Kingdom, in Germany and France and Russia. These countries understand that the Iranian nuclear issue is a problem and continues to be a problem that must be addressed by the international community. A number of them have said so publicly, and I appreciate their comments.

I appreciate the work of our intelligence community in helping us better understand Iran's past and present nuclear activities. Their information is critical in increasing our understanding and helping us develop a sound policy.

It is clear from the latest NIE that the Iranian Government has more to explain about its nuclear intentions and past actions, especially the covert nuclear weapons program pursued until the fall of 2003, which the Iranian regime has yet to acknowledge. The Iranians have a strategic choice to make. They can come clean with the international community about the scope of their nuclear activities and fully accept the longstanding offer to suspend their enrichment program and come to the table and negotiate, or they can continue on a path of isolation that is not in the best interest of the Iranian people. The choice is up to the Iranian regime.

I'm here also to talk about my friend Mike Johanns. I have gotten to know him well, and there's no doubt in my mind he'll make a great United States Senator from the State of Nebraska. He's an honorable, decent man, and he's a humble man. When given a task, he can get the job done.

People of Nebraska have gotten to know Mike as a result of his leadership when he was the Governor. I got to know Mike as the result of his being a fine leader at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Mike understands farming, and he understands ranching. He understands the issues that the people who work the soil will face. If I were someone living in Nebraska who cared about the agricultural industry, I'd want somebody who knew what he was talking about being my Senator. And Mike Johanns knows what he's talking about when it comes to agricultural matters.

He also understands what he's talking about when it comes to national security matters. He sat in the Cabinet Room with me and other members of my Cabinet, discussing how best to secure the United States of America from the threats of the world in which we live. It is important for the people of Nebraska to have a Senator who understands the realities of the world and is willing to support the Government in its efforts to protect the American people.

Mike Johanns is a man of values. He understands Nebraskan values. He can articulate Nebraskan values, but more importantly, he lives Nebraskan values.

And so I've come to say to the people of this good State: I know you're going to make up your own mind for what's right, but if I was a voter in this State, I'd sure pull that lever for Mike Johanns for the United States Senator. *[Laughter]* And if my wife was a voter for this State—*[laughter]*—she'd try to pull it twice. *[Laughter]*

So I'm proud to be here with Mike and Stephanie. Thank you, sir. Good luck, and God bless you. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:01 a.m. at Eppley Airfield. In his remarks, he referred to Stephanie Johanns, wife of Nebraska senatorial candidate Mike Johanns.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care and an Exchange With Reporters in Omaha

December 5, 2007

The President. It is a joy to be here at the OneWorld Community Health Center in

Omaha. I want to thank Andrea and Dr. McVea for the tour.

I say it's a joy because the spirit here, the spirit of community, the desire to help people who are less fortunate is prevalent. People here feel a great sense of community and accomplishment. And as well they should because community health centers, not only here in Omaha but around the country, provide a very vital service. I happen to think they're an integral part of a health care system because they provide care for the low-income, for the newly arrived, and they take the pressure off of our hospital emergency rooms.

And so I've come to thank the staff and the providers of compassionate health care here for their work. I remind the people of Omaha that this is a public-private partnership. The Federal Government is a—and my administration strongly supports the expansion and the extension and the reach of these community health centers. But the private sector, the public, needs to support these centers as well.

We spent a little time talking about whether or not the community understands the importance of a community health center. This community does. I think there is some awareness of how important OneWorld is, and I would hope that other citizens that aren't aware would find out the importance of a community health center.

When I—in 2000, when I was running, I said, look, I believe these are important centers because they provide an integral service, and they take pressure off of our health care systems around the country. And so I laid out a goal of expanding and—the health care centers by 1,200, and we're meeting that goal. And I want to thank Members of Congress from both parties for understanding the importance and the vitality of community health centers. And I look forward to working with Congress to continue to expand the reach of these important facilities.

And so, again, I want to thank you all for your hospitality. I really appreciate you giving me a chance to come to—a part of our national strategy is to make sure the uninsured can find good-quality primary care. This center serves—85 percent of its people don't speak English as a first language. By far, the

vast majority are low-income, and yet they're receiving first-class quality care. So I thank the docs and the nurses and the social workers and all the people who are making this facility such a good one.

Thanks for having me.

Iran

Q. Iran's President said the NIE is a victory for Iran. They want an apology from the United States and compensation, sir. Will you do that? Is the NIE a victory for Iran?

The President. [*Laughter*] You can mark down I chuckled.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. in the Adah and Leon Millard Foundation Conference Room at OneWorld Community Health Centers. In his remarks, he referred to Andrea Skolkin, executive director, and Kristine McVea, medical director, OneWorld Community Health Centers. A reporter referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr., and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso R. Jackson

December 6, 2007

Good afternoon. Before turning to the situation in the housing market, I send my sympathy to the families of those murdered in Omaha, Nebraska, yesterday. I was in Omaha just before the shooting took place, and I know what a difficult day it is for that fine community. The victims and their loved ones are in the prayers of Americans. The Federal Government stands ready to help in any way we can. And our whole Nation grieves with the people of Omaha.

I just had an important discussion on the housing market with Secretary Paulson, Secretary Jackson, and members of the mortgage industry.

The housing market is moving through a period of change. In recent years, innovative mortgage products have helped millions of Americans afford their own homes, and that's good. Unfortunately, some of these products

were used irresponsibly. Some lenders made loans that borrowers did not understand, especially in the subprime sector. Some borrowers took out loans they knew they could not afford. And to compound the problem, many mortgages are packaged into securities and sold to investors around the world. So when concerns about subprime loans begin to mount—began to mount, uncertainty spread to the broader financial markets.

Secretary Paulson and Secretary Jackson and Chairman Bernanke are monitoring developments in the housing market and working to limit the disruption to our overall economy. Data released this morning confirmed the difficulties facing the housing market. Yet one reason for confidence is that the downturn in housing comes against a backdrop of solid fundamentals in other areas, including low inflation, a healthy job market, record-high exports. America's economy has proved itself highly resilient. And it is strong, and it is flexible, and it is dynamic enough to weather this storm.

For individual homeowners, the problem is more difficult. Many of those feeling financial stress have an adjustable rate mortgage, which typically starts with a lower interest rate and then resets to a higher rate after a few years. Many of those borrowers cannot afford the higher payments. And now some are fearing foreclosure, which is a terrible burden for hard-working families and a source of concern for communities and neighborhoods across our country.

The rise in foreclosures would have negative consequences for our economy. Lenders and investors would face enormous losses, so they have an interest in supporting mortgage counseling and working with homeowners to prevent foreclosure.

The Government has a role to play as well. We should not bail out lenders, real estate speculators, or those who made the reckless decision to buy a home they knew they could never afford. Yet there are some responsible homeowners who could avoid foreclosure with some assistance. And in August, I announced a series of targeted actions to help them. My administration has moved forward in three key areas.

First, we've launched a new initiative at the Federal Housing Administration called

FHASecure. This program gives the FHA greater flexibility to offset refinancing to homeowners—to offer refinancing to homeowners who have good credit histories but cannot afford their current payments. In just 3 months, the FHA has helped more than 35,000 people refinance. And in the coming year, the FHA expects this program to help more than 300,000 families.

Second, in August, I asked Secretaries Paulson and Jackson to work with lenders and loan servicers and mortgage counselors and investors on an initiative to help struggling homeowners find a way to refinance. They assembled a private sector group called HOPE NOW Alliance. Their leaders are with us today. HOPE NOW is an example of Government bringing together members of the private sector to voluntarily address a national challenge, without taxpayer subsidies or without Government mandates. I'm pleased to announce that our efforts have yielded a promising new source of relief for American homeowners.

Representatives of HOPE NOW just briefed me on their plan to help homeowners who will not be able to make the higher payments on their subprime loan once the interest rates go up, but who can at least afford the current starter rate. HOPE NOW members have agreed on a set of industry-wide standards to provide relief to these borrowers in one of three ways: by refinancing an existing loan into a new private mortgage; by moving them into an FHASecure loan; or by freezing their current interest rate for 5 years.

Lenders are already refinancing and modifying mortgages on a case-by-case basis. With this systematic approach, HOPE NOW will be able to help large groups of homeowners all at once. This will bring more relief to more homeowners more quickly. HOPE NOW estimates there are up to 1.2 million American homeowners who could be eligible for this assistance.

Public awareness is critical to this effort because the group can only help homeowners who ask for it. So HOPE NOW recently mailed hundreds of thousands of letters to borrowers falling behind on their payments, and they have set up a counseling hotline that Americans can call 24 hours a day.

I've directed Secretaries Paulson and Jackson to expand the public awareness campaign. And I have a message for every homeowner worried about rising mortgage payments: The best you can do for your family is to call 1-800-995-HOPE [1-888-995-HOPE]. * That is 1-800-995-H-O-P-E [1-888-995-H-O-P-E].*

Third, the Federal Government is taking several regulatory actions to make the mortgage industry more transparent, reliable, and fair. Later this month, the Federal Reserve intends to announce stronger lending standards that will help protect borrowers. At the same time, HUD and the Federal banking regulators are taking steps to improve disclosure requirements so that homeowners can be confident that they are receiving complete, accurate, and understandable information about their mortgages.

As we take these steps, the Department of Justice will continue to pursue wrongdoing in the banking and housing industries so we can help ensure that those who defraud American consumers face justice.

These measures will help many struggling homeowners, and the United States Congress has the potential to help even more. Yet in 3 months since I made my proposals, the Congress has not sent me a single bill to help homeowners. If Members are serious about responding to the challenges in the housing market, they can start with the following steps.

First, Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the FHA. In April 2006, I sent Congress an FHA modernization bill. This bill would increase access to FHA-insured loans by lowering down payment requirements, allowing the FHA to insure bigger mortgages in high-cost States, and expanding FHA's authority to price insurance fairly with risk-based premiums. This bill could allow the FHA to reach an additional 250,000 families who could not otherwise qualify for prime-rate financing. Last year, the House passed the bill with more than 400 votes, and this year, the House passed it again. Yet the Senate has not acted. The liquidity and stability that FHA provides the market are needed more than ever, and I urge the

* White House correction.

United States Senate to move as quickly as possible on this important piece of legislation.

Second, Congress needs to temporarily reform the Tax Code to help homeowners refinance during this time of housing market stress. Under current law, if the value of your house declines and your bank forgives a portion of your mortgage, the Tax Code treats the amount forgiven as taxable income. When you're worried about making your payments, higher taxes are the last thing you need. The House agrees and recently passed this relief with bipartisan support. Yet the Senate has not responded. This simple reform could help many American homeowners in an hour of need, and the Senate should pass it as soon as possible.

Changing the Tax Code can also help State and local governments do their part to help homeowners. Under current law, cities and States can issue tax-exempt bonds to finance new mortgages for first-time home buyers. My administration has proposed allowing cities and States to issue these tax-exempt mortgage bonds for an additional purpose: to refinance existing loans. This temporary measure would make it easier for State housing authorities to help troubled borrowers, and Congress should approve it quickly.

Third, Congress needs to pass funding to support mortgage counseling. Nonprofit groups like NeighborWorks provides essential services to—by helping homeowners find affordable mortgage solutions and prevent foreclosures. My budget requests nearly \$120 million for NeighborWorks and another 50 million for HUD's mortgage counseling programs. Congress has had these requests since February, yet it has not sent me a bill, and they need to get the funding to my desk.

Fourth, Congress needs to pass legislation to reform Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. These institutions provide liquidity in the mortgage market that benefits millions of homeowners, and it is vital they operate safely and operate soundly. So I've called on Congress to pass legislation that strengthens independent regulation of the GSEs and ensures they focus on their important housing mission. The GSE reform bill passed by the House earlier this year is a good start, but

the Senate has not acted, and the United States Senate needs to pass this legislation soon.

The holidays are fast approaching, and unfortunately, this will be a time of anxiety for Americans worried about their mortgages and their homes. There's no perfect solution, but the homeowners deserve our help. And the steps I've outlined today are a sensible response to a serious challenge. I call on Congress to move forward quickly and join with me in delivering relief to homeowners in need so we can keep our economy healthy and the American Dream alive.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:23 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 6, 2007

Mr. Secretary, thank you for that kind introduction, and thank you all for joining us. Laura and I are pleased to welcome you on this joyous occasion. As the Secretary said, in a few moments, we will light the National Christmas Tree. And as he also said, this is a tradition that dates back to President Calvin Coolidge.

There's one person with us today who remembers that first annual Christmas tree lighting—and Santa, we are glad you're here. [Laughter] We know this is a busy time of year for you, and we're thrilled you're here. And we really appreciate you bringing Mrs. Claus. Both you and I married well. [Laughter]

I appreciate the members of my Cabinet for joining us, Members of the Congress. I want to thank Vin Cipolla, Mary Bomar. I particularly want to thank the men and women who work for the National Park Service.

Pastor, thank you for your blessing. I believe these entertainers didn't disappoint anyone. We're proud you're here, and thank you for your beautiful music.

Christmas is a time of rejoicing and reflection. Each year at this time, we rejoice in the proclamation of good news, that in Bethlehem of Judea, a Savior was born. And we

rejoice in the Christmas promise of peace to men of good will. We also reflect on the mystery of Christmas, the story of the Almighty, who entered history in the most vulnerable form possible, hidden in the weakness of a newborn child. And we reflect on the call of our Creator, who by taking this form, reminds us of our duty to protect and care for the weak and the vulnerable among us.

During this Christmas season, millions of Americans will answer this call by reaching out a compassionate hand to help brothers and sisters in need. We are thankful for these good souls who show the good heart of our Nation. We're also thankful for the thousands of Americans who answer the call by serving our Nation in uniform. Many will spend this Christmas stationed in distant and dangerous lands, far from homes and from the families they love. They are never far from our thoughts, and they're always in our prayers. America honors their sacrifice and that of their families, who also serve our Nation. We're grateful for all they do to ensure that we live in the freedom our Creator intended for every man, woman, and child on the face of this Earth.

And now, as an expression of our hope for peace in this Christmas season, we're going to light the National Christmas Tree. And we have asked two young Americans to join us. Brianna Kinder helps others through her participation in the Montgomery County Police Activities League's Kids Care Club. And Damarcus Hawkins gives his time as part of the Discovery Creek Children's Museum service learning program.

And now if Brianna and Damarcus will join Laura, and if you will join me in a countdown—five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who introduced the President; Vin Cipolla, president and chief executive officer, National Park Foundation; and Rev. Roger P. Freeman, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Clarksville, TN.

Proclamation 8210—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 2007

December 6, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans value deeply our ability to speak, assemble, and worship freely. As a Nation, we can help freedom-loving people everywhere build a world in which these rights are honored and respected. During Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we celebrate the freedoms guaranteed to all Americans and protected in our Constitution's Bill of Rights.

Many of these fundamental freedoms are still denied to people in countries around the world. The United States continues to stand with those who work to build democracy and secure the blessings of liberty. Individuals are struggling to create free societies in Cuba, Belarus, and Syria. And the day will come when they, and the citizens of other lands such as North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Sudan, will no longer be restricted from practicing their faith, voicing their opinions, and enjoying the many blessings of freedom.

Freedom and dignity are God's gifts, and during Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we look forward with confidence to the eventual triumph of human rights for all mankind.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 2007, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 2007, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 2007, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to mark these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:53 a.m., December 11, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 12.

Executive Order 13453—Closing of Executive Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government on Monday, December 24, 2007

December 6, 2007

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. All executive branch departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall be closed and their employees excused from duty on Monday, December 24, 2007, the day before Christmas Day, except as provided in section 2 below.

Sec. 2. The heads of executive branch departments and agencies may determine that certain offices and installations of their organizations, or parts thereof, must remain open and that certain employees must report for duty on December 24, 2007, for reasons of national security or defense or other public need.

Sec. 3. Monday, December 24, 2007, shall be considered as falling within the scope of Executive Order 11582 of February 11, 1971, and of 5 U.S.C. 5546 and 6103(b) and other similar statutes insofar as they relate to the pay and leave of employees of the United States.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 6, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:52 a.m., December 7, 2007]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 11.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First Minister Ian Paisley and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland

December 7, 2007

President Bush. One of the great experiences for me during my Presidency is to witness historic occasions, and I'm witnessing such an occasion with the arrival of Reverend Paisley and Mr. Martin McGuinness here to the White House. These two men are—have dedicated themselves to embettering their—Northern Ireland through their courage and conviction and desire to put aside the past and focus on a hopeful future.

And so I want to welcome you all here. I congratulate you for seizing the moment and writing a hopeful chapter. I'm looking forward to hearing about how the United States can help Northern Ireland move forward. I know one way we can help, and that is to encourage our business leaders to take a good look at the economic opportunities that Northern Ireland presents.

And so I welcome you here. I'm proud of your accomplishments. And I welcome you all to say a few comments to the TV, if you care to do so.

First Minister Paisley. Well, Mr. President, our first words on that—[*inaudible*]. We want to say from the people of Northern Ireland, "Thank you." Thank you to the American people for all they have done for us in the past. We did a lot for you in the past too.

But what I can say is we deeply appreciate that. And we also deeply appreciate the fact that we're here today, and that you have met us and have tried to encourage us on this. We have had our political squabbles and fights. I think we have come to the end of that. I think that peace has come; there will be a fight for peace. You don't win peace; you have to fight to keep it. And we intend to that, and we're dedicated to that.

But we do need help in the economic field. And we're glad that the door has opened. We have had a very good reception in your country so far, and of course—[*inaudible*]. And when we look back and see this mighty army that's following hard in your tracks, we know that this is your final. And we say, thank

you, and we look forward to good dealings between our little country and yours in the coming days.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Martin.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness.

Yes. Can I, too, reiterate the comments of the First Minister in expressing our deepest thanks and appreciation to you and your administration for the tremendous help that we have received throughout the course of the process; follows on from the tradition of President Clinton and his administration.

So we're hugely appreciative of both of you for all of the tremendous support that we have received. Up until the 26th of March this year, Ian Paisley and I never had a conversation about anything—[laughter]—not even about the weather. And now we have worked very closely together over the course of the last 7 months, and there hasn't been an angry word between us.

President Bush. Thank you.

Deputy First Minister McGuinness. So I think that that clearly shows that we are set for a new course. There is peace and stability. We have transformed the political situation. What we now need to do, as you have correctly identified, is transform the economic situation so that we can give our young people, in particular, a better future.

I am confident that we can do that, and with the tremendous assistance we've received here in the United States, and particularly working towards the economic investment conference in May, the future looks greater than it ever has in the course of Irish history.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

The President's Radio Address

December 7, 2007

Good morning. Today I'm going to talk to you about some important policies affecting taxpayers and homeowners this holiday season. On Thursday, the United States Senate passed a bill to fix the Alternative Minimum Tax, or AMT. The AMT was designed to en-

sure that the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT decades ago, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is creeping up on more and more middle class families, and as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to the AMT. On average, these taxpayers would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next year. This is a huge tax increase that taxpayers do not deserve and that Congress must stop.

I congratulate the United States Senate for acting to do so. Now it's up to the House of Representatives to move the bill. They've already delayed the bill so long that 75 billion in tax refund checks could be delayed next year.

I urge the House of Representatives to get the Senate-passed AMT relief bill to my desk before they adjourn so I can sign it and protect millions of families from higher taxes and avert any further delay in the tax refund checks next year.

I also know many Americans are concerned about meeting their mortgage obligations. The private sector and the Government both have a role to play. More than 3 months ago, I announced a series of targeted actions to help responsible homeowners avoid foreclosure. And on Thursday, I met with Treasury Secretary Paulson and Housing Secretary Jackson, who updated me on the progress.

The first step we took was to launch a new initiative at the Federal Housing Administration called FHASecure. This program gives the FHA greater flexibility to offer refinancing to homeowners who have good credit histories but cannot afford their current payments. In just 3 months, the FHA has helped more than 35,000 people refinance their homes. And in the coming year, the FHA expects this program to help more than 300,000 families.

Second, we helped assemble the HOPE NOW Alliance, which includes lenders, loan servicers, investors, and mortgage counselors. HOPE NOW is an example of the Government bringing together members of the private sector to voluntarily address a national challenge, without taxpayer subsidies or Government mandates. This group has agreed on a set of industry-wide standards

to help struggling homeowners by refinancing an existing loan into a new private mortgage or by moving them into an FHA Secure loan or by freezing their current interest rates for 5 years.

Lenders are already refinancing and modifying mortgages on a case-by-case basis. By taking a systemic approach, HOPE NOW will be able to help large groups of homeowners all at once. HOPE NOW estimates that up to 1.2 million homeowners could be eligible for assistance. And HOPE NOW has set up a counseling hotline that Americans can call 24 hours a day. I urge homeowners who are worried about rising mortgage payments to call 1-888-995-H-O-P-E to get help.

Third, the Federal Government is working to reduce the likelihood of similar problems in the future. Regulators are taking action to make the mortgage industry more transparent, reliable, and fair. Our goal is to ensure that homeowners receive complete, accurate, and understandable information about their mortgages.

These measures will help many struggling homeowners, and Congress has the potential to help even more. Yet in the 3 months since I made my proposals, Congress has not sent me a single bill to help homeowners. If Members are serious about responding to the challenges in the housing market, they can start by taking several important steps.

Congress needs to pass legislation to modernize the FHA. This bill could allow the FHA to help 250,000 families by the end of 2008. Congress needs to temporarily reform the Tax Code to help homeowners refinance during this time of housing market stress. And Congress needs to pass funding to support mortgage counseling. With this funding, we could help more homeowners choose the mortgage that is right for them.

As well, Congress needs to pass legislation to reform Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. By strengthening the independent regulation of these institutions, we can ensure they focus on their mission to expand homeownership in a fiscally responsible way.

These commonsense measures have been before Congress for months. Congress needs to pass these measures quickly and send

them to my desk so we can help homeowners in need and protect the American Dream for all our citizens.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on December 7 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 7. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

December 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 2

During the day, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a reception for Kennedy Center honorees.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the Kennedy Center Honors Gala at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

December 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted the Congressional Ball.

The President announced that he has named Daniel M. Price as Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs.

December 4

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Vladimir Putin of Russia. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the historic Evermay house, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a Republican National Committee luncheon.

The President announced his designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to attend the inauguration of Cristina E. Fernandez de Kirchner as President of Argentina on December 10: Elaine L. Chao (head of delegation); and E. Anthony Wayne.

The President announced that he has nominated Gregory B. Jaczko to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Hector E. Morales to be Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization of American States (with the rank of Ambassador).

The President announced that he has nominated John J. Sullivan to be Deputy Secretary of Commerce.

December 5

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Omaha, NE, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Martha Connot. He then toured OneWorld Community Health Centers.

Later in the morning, at a private residence, the President attended a Johanns for Senate reception.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

December 6

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with leaders of prodemocracy political parties and nongovernmental organizations from Belarus.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria to the White House on December 13.

December 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has named Charles P. Blahous as Deputy Assistant to the President for Economic Policy and Deputy Director of the National Economic Council.

The President announced that he has named Gordon Johndroe as Deputy Assistant to the President, Deputy Press Secretary, and National Security Council Spokesman.

The President announced that he has named John M. Herrmann II as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for International Trade, Energy, and the Environment on the National Security Council.

The President announced that he has named Sally McDonough Niemic as Special Assistant to the President and Director of Communications and Press Secretary to the First Lady.

The President announced that he has named David Sherzer as Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives and External Affairs.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted December 3 *

Jonathan Steven Adelstein, of South Dakota, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term expiring June 30, 2013 (reappointment).

Michael E. Fryzel, of Illinois, to be a member of the National Credit Union Administration Board for a term expiring August 2, 2013, vice JoAnn Johnson, term expired.

David R. Hill, of Missouri, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Jeffrey R. Holmstead, resigned.

* These nominations were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 6.

Charles W. Larson, Jr.,
of Iowa, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and
Plenipotentiary of the United States of
America to the Republic of Latvia.

Francis Mulvey,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Surface
Transportation Board for a term expiring De-
cember 31, 2012 (reappointment).

Neil Romano,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of
Labor, vice W. Roy Grizzard, resigned.

Withdrawn December 3 *

John A. Gastright,
of South Carolina, for the rank of Amba-
sador during his tenure of service as U.S. Co-
ordinator for Afghanistan, Department of
State, which was sent to the Senate on Au-
gust 2, 2007.

Submitted December 4

Gregory B. Jaczko,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member
of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for
the term of 5 years expiring June 30, 2013
(reappointment).

Hector E. Morales,
of Texas, to be Permanent Representative of
the United States of America to the Organi-
zation of American States, with the rank of
Ambassador, vice John F. Maisto, resigned.

John J. Sullivan,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of Com-
merce, vice David A. Sampson, resigned.

Submitted December 5

Mark R. Filip,
of Illinois, to be Deputy Attorney General,
vice Paul J. McNulty, resigned.

Submitted December 6

Ricardo H. Hinojosa,
of Texas, to be a member of the U.S. Sen-
tencing Commission for a term expiring Oc-
tober 31, 2013 (reappointment).

Ricardo H. Hinojosa,
of Texas, to be Chair of the U.S. Sentencing
Commission (reappointment).

Michael E. Horowitz,
of Maryland, to be a member of the U.S.
Sentencing Commission for a term expiring
October 31, 2013 (reappointment).

Stephen N. Limbaugh, Jr.,
of Missouri, to be U.S. District Judge for the
Eastern District of Missouri, vice Donald J.
Stohr, retired.

Ed Schafer,
of North Dakota, to be Secretary of Agri-
culture, vice Mike Johanns, resigned.

William E. Smith,
of Rhode Island, to be U.S. Circuit Judge
for the First Circuit, vice Bruce M. Selya,
retired.

George W. Venables,
of California, to be U.S. Marshal for the
Southern District of California for the term
of 4 years, vice Raul David Bejarano.

**Checklist
of White House Press Releases**

The following list contains releases of the Office
of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as
items nor covered by entries in the Digest of
Other White House Announcements.

Released December 3

Transcript of a press briefing by National Se-
curity Adviser Stephen J. Hadley

Statement by National Security Adviser Ste-
phen J. Hadley on the National Intelligence
Estimate

Released December 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press
Secretary Tony Fratto

Transcript of a press briefing by Council on
Environmental Quality Chairman James L.
Connaughton and Under Secretary of State

* This withdrawal was released by the Office
of the Press Secretary on December 6.

for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula J. Dobriansky on the U.N. convention on climate change

Statement by the Press Secretary on the shootings in Omaha, Nebraska

Fact sheet: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Uninsured and Underserved Americans

Released December 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Umaru Yar'Adua of Nigeria

Statement by the Press Secretary on House of Representatives action on energy security legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senate passage of Alternative Minimum Tax legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 50 and H.R. 465

Fact sheet: Helping American Families Keep Their Homes

Released December 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Fact sheet: November 2007 Marks Record 51st Consecutive Month of Job Growth

Acts Approved by the President

Approved December 6

H.R. 50 / Public Law 110–132
Multinational Species Conservation Funds
Reauthorization Act of 2007

H.R. 465 / Public Law 110–133
Asian Elephant Conservation Reauthoriza-
tion Act of 2007